

Studio Title: Envisioning and Celebrating the Historic Southeast Lancaster Neighborhood, City of Lancaster, PA

Southeast Lancaster in South Central Pennsylvania has both a rich and troubled past. Throughout history, the southeast quadrant of Lancaster served as a haven for the city's poorest and most challenged residents – including African American slaves – and it experienced the devastating effects of urban renewal, causing the widespread displacement of nearly all homes and businesses along the central corridor. Today the quadrant has become a haven for immigrants and its population is primarily Latino/a/x and Black, with comparatively low income and education levels. Despite challenges of disparities and racism, the historic Southeast neighborhood has a rich identity, including a strong presence of multicultural and religious institutions, cemeteries, community centers, businesses, and restaurants. In fall 2022, the Penn State Landscape Architecture Community Design Studio engaged with the historic southeast neighborhood to celebrate the gems, grapple with the systemic issues, and envision the future of the southeast quadrant.

### A Listening Tour

The studio began with listening to the community's thoughts on their issues, their "gems," and their hopes for the future. Students created maps showing GIS spatial, historic, and demographic information, reviewed city planning documents, and visited the community to talk to residents and experience the neighborhood in a field trip to the southeast quadrant. Community members also invited us to join their Fall Festival, and we had a booth to gather feedback and learn about their culture firsthand.



[Leann Andrews]



[Leann Andrews]



[Leann Andrews]

### Community Workshops

Students traveled to The Mix, an organization that supports youth and families in the southeast quadrant of Lancaster, and presented their preliminary design ideas. They received feedback from over 60 youth (ages 8 to 18), teachers, and their parents. A representative of the City of Lancaster Planning Department also joined. Students gained valuable communication and listening skills, and residents had the opportunity to discuss the ways they envision their future.

### Visioning Charrettes

In addition to the community workshop, students spoke with over 20 people who lived or worked in the Southeast Lancaster in person or via Zoom video conferences. From this information, students then engaged in a series of internal charrettes to envision the future of the southeast quadrant at the community and the site scale.

The Hamer Center was instrumental to the engagement part of the course, providing transportation and materials to support the community and student activities.



[Leann Andrews]



[Marcella Walter]

## Module 1: The Wicked Problem

Students familiarized themselves with the people and places of Southeast Lancaster and learned about the community’s concerns, hopes, dreams, and aspirations for themselves and their neighborhood. Students then diagrammed out a “wicked problem,” or a systemic and complex set of issues that they would like to address through their design projects. Wicked problems ranged from addressing the effects of redlining and racism, to a lack of greenspaces, to disinvestment in transportation and physical and mental health issues, and more.

## Module 2: The Vision

During “The Vision” assignment, students worked in groups to identify a neighborhood vision and plan to address concerns of Historic Southeast Lancaster while enhancing its opportunities. These community-scale visions created by students could be used by residents to communicate their needs and desires to the city in the future.

Nathan Perspective of Cemetery Scenic Study



This new cemetery will be constructed and developed on the basis of the original plan. It will not change the position of any landmarks. This building allows that the original cemetery will open around and new roads, housing, shops, and transit will be built.



[Ruoyu Wang]



[Andrew Kuka]

## Module 3: The Catalyst

The studio concluded with each student designing a smaller scale “catalyst project” that responded to the placemaking needs of the community. There was a wide range of student projects: community parks, riverfront trails, transportation corridors, economic investments in local businesses, affordable housing, greenspaces for festivals, cemetery revitalization projects, sports fields, community gardens and food-based centers, and more.

## Community Response

The course had two final reviews: an internal in-person design review with faculty and an external online presentation that invited each community member that spoke to the class. Students learned valuable skills receiving community feedback and community members had an opportunity to engage in conversation about their future with other residents who live and work in the Southeast Lancaster, including representatives from the city.



[Kyle Skrapits]

Student Participant Project Results provided shall be used solely for Sponsor’s internal review and analysis. Any and all rights to the Student Participant Project Results, including all Intellectual Property Rights, if any, shall remain the rights of the individual Student Participants as appropriate under the law regarding rights to and ownership of intellectual property unless there is a separate written agreement addressing the ownership of intellectual property. Prior to any commercial use or subsequent transfer of any Student Participant Project Results, Sponsor must obtain the appropriate rights from the respective owners.

This publication is available in alternative media on request. The University is committed to equal access to programs, facilities, admission and employment for all persons. It is the policy of the University to maintain an environment free of harassment and free of discrimination against any person because of age, race, color, ancestry, national origin, religion, creed, service in the uniformed services (as defined in state and federal law), veteran status, sex, sexual orientation, marital or family status, pregnancy, pregnancy-related conditions, physical or mental disability, gender, perceived gender, gender identity, genetic information or political ideas. Discriminatory conduct and harassment, as well as sexual misconduct and relationship violence, violates the dignity of individuals, impedes the realization of the University’s educational mission, and will not be tolerated. Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to the Affirmative Action Office, The Pennsylvania State University, 328 Boucke Building, University Park, PA 16802-5901, Email: aao@psu.edu, Tel (814) 863-0471.



**PennState**  
College of Arts  
and Architecture

**Stuckeman School**  
Architecture • Graphic Design • Landscape Architecture